

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows: claims 1-11 have been canceled without prejudice; claim 12 is currently amended; and claims 13-16 have been previously presented.

1-11 are canceled without prejudice

12 (currently amended) A network system comprising:

individual service provider devices each having a first authentication server and access point terminals for connecting user terminals of contracted users of at least one of the individual service provider devices to a network;

a parallel service provider device connected to the individual service provider devices, the parallel service provider device having a roaming contract with the individual service provider devices and including a second authentication server and no access point terminal; and

wherein each of the individual service provider devices comprises:

determining means for determining whether a user who issues a connection request from a user terminal is a contract member of the parallel service provider device;

transmitting means for transmitting the connection request to the parallel service provider device to cause the second authentication server of the parallel services provider device to perform user authentication when the user is a contract member;

authentication means for causing the first authentication server of the individual service provider devices to perform user authentication when the user is not a contract member; and

connecting means for connecting the user terminal to the network and charging

the user for connection when a result of user authentication is good.

13 (previously presented) The network system according to claim 12, wherein the connection request comprises an e-mail address including a domain name of the parallel service provider device, and

the determining means determines whether the user is a contract member based on the presence or absence of the domain name of the parallel service provider device in the connection request.

14 (previously presented) The network's system according to claim 12, wherein the parallel service provider device is connected to the individual service provider devices through an exclusive line.

15 (previously presented) The network system according to claim 12, wherein the individual service provider devices send respective user connection logs to the parallel service provider device.

16 (previously presented) The network system according to claim 12, wherein the parallel service provider device comprises:

receiving means for receiving a user name for a user terminal of a user who requests a signup; and

further determining means for determining whether e-mail addresses including a combination of the input user name and sub-domains of the parallel service provider device has been registered so as to register one of non-registered e-mail addresses.